

SAUDI ARABIA | IN FOCUS

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE OF
THE ROYAL EMBASSY OF SAUDI ARABIA IN WASHINGTON, DC



December 1, 2009

HAJJ

King Abdullah hosts annual end of Hajj reception

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz hosted in Mina on November 28 the annual reception for heads of Hajj missions, Islamic dignitaries and royal guests, which this year included the Sudanese Vice President Ali Othman Taha and Malian Prime Minister Modibo Sidibe. King Abdullah extended his Eid Al-Adha greetings, noting that the Hajj embodies Islamic fraternity. He remarked, "Thanks to God, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has done its best to provide services for the guests of Allah Almighty. And it is able, as far as possible, to achieve security for pilgrims and deter whoever dares to infringe on their worship and security."

Hajj 1430 successfully comes to a close

Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, Governor of Makkah and Chairman of the Hajj Central Committee, declared this year's Hajj a success and free of major accidents during a press conference in Mina on November 29. He announced that 2,521,000 million pilgrims participated in this year's Hajj, including 154,000 domestic and 1,613,000 foreign pilgrims. The governor added that an estimated 753,000 pilgrims without valid Hajj permits participated in the Hajj, which caused some of the overcrowding, but stressed that with stricter enforcements of entry regulations, the number will dramatically be reduced next year.

Prince Khalid said the Ministry of Health recruited 17,000 personnel, the Municipal and Rural Affairs Ministry, 22,000 and the Public Security 100,000, to serve the pilgrims. Except for the approximately 68 confirmed cases of H1N1 swine flu among the pilgrims, including five deaths, the Hajj was free of epidemics and contagious diseases.

Grand Mufti calls on Muslims to reject extremism

Saudi Arabia's Grand Mufti Sheikh Abdulaziz Al-Ashelkh warned Muslims against deviant ideology and called on them to adhere to the true teachings of the Prophet at his annual Arafat sermon at the Namira Mosque. Sheikh Al-Asheikh said the greatest challenge facing the Muslim community is from deviant ideology and that adherence to the right principles is one of the most important duties of a Muslim. One of the greatest deviations is politicizing the Hajj and threatening its security, he added, stressing that the Saudi leadership will not allow anyone to destabilize the Holy Land.

Ambassador hosts Eid Al-Adha prayer

Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir hosted Eid Al-Adha prayers at the Embassy in Washington on November 27 to mark the end of the annual Hajj. Afterwards, the ambassador hosted a breakfast for embassy staff and members of the Saudi community. An estimated 550 people attended the event.

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah orders aid for victims of flooding

King Abdullah directed that emergency aid be provided quickly to those affected by heavy rain that fell on the Jeddah Governorate on November 25, including the immediate disbursement of financial aid, housing, food and other supplies. More than one hundred people were killed in flash floods in Jeddah, Makkah, and Rabegh, civil defense officials reported. An additional nine hundred people were rescued after the rain and flooding swept away cars and houses.

On November 30, King Abdullah ordered the formation of a high-level fact-finding committee, led by Makkah Governor Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, to assess personal and property losses and establish if anyone bears any responsibility for the recent flooding in Jeddah region. The royal order, which described the rain and flooding as unextraordinary, did not rule out negligence by authorities. The committee was ordered to promptly accomplish its duties and report directly to King Abdullah. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Finance will make an initial payment of \$267,000 to the relatives of each person who died during the flooding.

Nine Saudi soldiers reported missing

Ministry of Defense and Aviation reported November 26 that nine soldiers have been reported missing after clashes with infiltrators along the southern borders with Yemen. The statement follows the publication of pictures purportedly of Saudi soldiers taken captive during the ongoing military operations. The Ministry stressed that the fate of the soldiers is not clear but said their captures are entirely responsible for their well-being.

FOREIGN AID

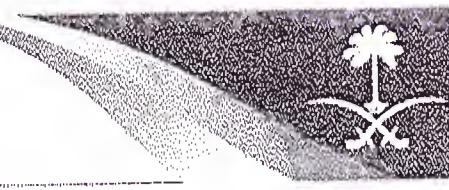
Mauritanian Prime Minister, Saudi Ambassador inaugurate water project

Mauritanian Prime Minister Moulaye Ould Mohamed Laghdaf and Saudi Ambassador to Mauritania Saud bin Abdulaziz Al-Jabri inaugurated on November 24 a Saudi-funded Drinking Water Project for fifty-one villages in central and eastern Mauritania. The \$5.6 million project will be financed by the Saudi Fund for Development.



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December 8, 2009

SAUDI ARABIA

King Abdullah orders 10,000 residential units for displaced in Jazan

On December 2 Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz toured Jazan Province, the site of last month's military skirmishes between terrorist infiltrators coming across the Kingdom's southern border and the Saudi Armed Forces. After meeting with front-line troops, King Abdullah warned those who have committed bloodshed on Saudi territory will be taught the lesson that the Saudi military can defend its country and people and will repulse any attempts to violate the sanctity and sovereignty of the Kingdom.

Later, King Abdullah announced the construction of 10,000 new housing units to permanently shelter displaced people in Jazan. The shelters must be completed and handed over to their new residents within a short period of time. In addition, all necessary urban facilities, including mosques, health centers, and schools, will be provided along with the housing.

SAUDI-U.S. RELATIONS

Prince Saud Al-Faisal meets with Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud Al-Faisal met in Washington December 8 with United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. During the meeting, they discussed a number of issues pertaining to bilateral cooperation and regional and international issues of common concern, including the Middle East peace process.

Earlier in the day, Prince Saud also met with Special Envoy for Middle East Peace George Mitchell and National Security Advisor James Jones. The two sides discussed Saudi-U.S. relations, strategies for reviving the peace process, Saudi efforts to prevent infiltration across its border with Yemen, Iran's nuclear program, and other important issues. All three of the meetings were attended by Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

FOREIGN RELATIONS

83rd Meeting of OAPEC Council of Ministers concluded

Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources Ali Al-Naimi led the Kingdom's delegation to the 83rd meeting of the Ministerial Council of the Organization of Arab

Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) in Cairo on December 4. In a statement released after the two-day session concluded, Minister Al-Naimi said that world oil markets are stable, adding that current prices are appropriate for both producers and consumers.

Saudi Arabia rejects protectionism at WTO conference

Saudi Arabia respects its international trade commitments and all other countries must do the same, Saudi Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdullah bin Ahmed Zainal said during a speech on December 1 before the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Geneva. The Minister, who headed the Kingdom's delegation to the conference, urged the world not to resort to protectionist measures. Instead, he insisted countries should reconsider their negotiating positions and show flexibility in order to complete the Doha Round of trade talks as soon as possible.

FOREIGN AID

Kingdom donates \$500 million to support Arab enterprises

Saudi Arabia has notified the Secretary-General of the Arab League Amr Moussa that it has delivered \$500 million towards the \$2 billion fund established by the Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to support small and medium-sized enterprises in the Arab world. The \$500 million donation fulfills the Kingdom's pledge at the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit held in Kuwait last January. The Kuwait summit stressed the importance of elevating the standard of living for Arab citizens, granting priority to joint Arab Investments, and allowing for greater participation by the private sector and civil society in economic and social development.

Saudi relief planes arrive in Vietnam

A Saudi relief plane arrived in Hanoi on December 2 carrying 100 tons of humanitarian relief for those affected by Typhoon Ketsana, which struck central Vietnam on September 26, killing at least 163 people and causing \$782 million in damage, and Typhoon Mirinae, which hit the southern central coast on November 2, causing \$280 million in damages. A second relief plane followed on December 3, carrying an additional 100 tons of relief supplies.



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Saudi Arabia's Record Budget for FY 2010 Includes Focus on Education; Priorities Include Increased Student Enrollments and New Universities

December 23, 2009

[Washington, DC] - Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz announced a record budget of expenditures for FY 2010, totaling more than \$146 billion, with more than a quarter of the funds designated for education. The FY 2010 educational funding represents a 13% increase over FY 2009.

"The allocation of SR137.6 billion (\$36.7 billion) for education and training emphasizes the government's desire to invest in Saudi citizens, considering human development as the core of real development," said Dr. Ali Al-Attiyah, Deputy Minister of Higher Education.

The Education Ministry's FY 2010 budget is set to fund the King Abdullah Project for Development of Public Education, the creation of 1,200 new schools and the completion of more than 3,000 school buildings already under construction. The Ministry of Higher Education's budget includes funding for the construction of four new universities and the expansion of existing ones, increasing student enrollments at institutes of higher learning and scholarship programs abroad. Currently, the Saudi government offers more than 60,000 scholarships to Saudi students around the world. The record budget will also include funds to sponsor 5,000 additional students to study abroad in 2010 as part of the King Abdullah Scholarship Program.

"Our commitment to offering the best possible education to all of our citizens to prepare them to succeed in a 21st century economy remains steadfast, and is reflected in the budgetary considerations we've made for the next year," said Saudi Ambassador to the United States Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubair.

The size and quality of the Saudi education system continues to grow to meet the demands of a growing population and a diversifying economy. The Kingdom's ratio of 15 students to every teacher is one of the lowest in the world.

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